

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 SINGAP 02593 120726Z  
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EA-10 IO-13 VO-05 INSE-00 CIAE-00  
INR-10 DODE-00 /044 W  
-----029998 120727Z /11

R 120630Z JUN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0452  
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA  
AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR  
AMEMBASSY MANILA  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 2593

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SREF  
SUBJECT: INDOCHINESE REFUGEES: SINGAPORE TRANSIT CENTER

REF: GENEVA 8794

1. WE WARMLY ENDORSE GENEVA'S REFTEL SUGGESTION THAT ABOUT 500 NUMBERS BE ALLOTTED TO UNHCR FOR SINGAPORE REFUGEES IN ORDER TO GET TRANSIT CENTER PROJECT OFF DEAD CENTER, CONDITIONAL UPON ADDITIONAL NUMBERS BEING PROVIDED BY OTHER COUNTRIES.

2. AS WE HAVE BEEN REPORTING, THERE IS NO REAL CHANCE OF MOVEMENT ON THIS PROJECT UNLESS UNHCR TAKES THE INITIATIVE. WE CAN APPRECIATE UNHCR WISH THAT SINGAPOREANS RESPOND TO MACE'S DECEMBER 1977 LETTER BUT THERE IS NO PROSPECT OF GOS DOING THIS. SINGAPOREANS APPARENTLY FEEL THEY HAVE ALREADY RESPONDED TO LETTER MANY TIMES OVER IN  
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VARIOUS PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND OTHER COMMENTS SPELLING OUT IN DETAIL THEIR NEEDS RE ADVANCE QUARANTEES. WHEN WE LAST SUGGESTED TO SINGAPOREANS THAT THEY START BALL ROLLING BY REPLYING TO MACE LETTER, THEY WERE SURPRISED AND OBVIOUSLY NOT FAVORABLY INCLINED. THERE APPEAR TO BE SOME MISCONCEPTIONS HERE: UNHCR IN GENEVA SEEMS TO FEEL THAT IT HAS MADE FIRM PROPOSAL TO GOS AND THAT PROPRIETY REQUIRES GOS RESPONSE. SINGAPOREANS,

ON OTHER HAND, SEE UNHCR "PROPOSAL" AS NOTHING MORE THAN FEW TENTATIVE COMMENTS BY SAMPATKUMAR IN LATE 1977, A RATHER PER-  
FUNCTORY LETTER FROM MACE, AND THEN SIX MONTHS OF SILENCE BROKEN  
ONLY BY PERIODIC US (NOT UNHCR) EXPRESSIONS OF CONTINUED  
INTEREST. SOMETHING OBVIOUSLY IS NEEDED TO BREAK OUT THIS PRO-  
POSAL, AND USMISSION GENEVA SUGGESTION MIGHT WELL FILL THE  
BILL.

3. AS SUGGESTED REFTTEL, CONCERN OVER ALLOCATING NUMBERS  
FOR SINGAPORE COULD BE ALLEVIATED BY LIMITING THEM TO REFUGEES  
ARRIVING ON MERCHANT VESSELS. PRACTICAL EFFECT WOULD BE SAME  
WITH OR WITHOUT THIS LIMITATION. SINGAPOREANS REMAIN ACCUTELY  
AWARE THAT THEY ARE WORLD'S MOST DENSELY POPULATED COUNTRY AND  
WE SEE NO PROSPECT THAT THEY CAN BE INDUCED TO ADMIT REFUGEES  
ARRIVING IN SMALL BOATS, ESPECIALLY WITH MALAYSIAN BEACHES ONLY  
A FEW MILES AWAY.

4. EVEN THOUGH IMPROMPTU REFUGEE TRANSIT FACILITY IS  
ALREADY OPERATING HERE SUPPORTED BY ONE-AT-A-TIME ADVANCE  
GUARANTEES FROM USG AND OTHER COUNTRIES, WE BELIEVE ESTAB-  
LISHMENT OF PROPOSED TRANSIT CENTER WOULD BE DECIDED ADVANTAGE.  
UNHCR IS FACING GROWING DIFFICULTIES IN HOUSING THE 400-PLUS  
REFUGEES NOW IN SINGAPORE PLUS NEW ARRIVALS, WHILE GOS IS  
BEGINNING TO SHOW SIGNS OF NERVOUSNESS AT EVER-INCREASING INFLOW.  
IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR LARGER NUMBER OF  
REFUGEES, PROPOSED TRANSIT CAMP WOULD EXTEND TIME AVAILABLE  
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FOR PROCESSING THEM; WE NOW HAVE MAXIMUM OF THREE MONTHS,  
WHILE PRIME MINISTER LEE HAS SAID THAT DEADLINE FOR MOVING  
REFUGEES IN PROPOSED CAMP COULD BE AS MUCH AS 9-12 MONTHS.

5. WE ARE ASSUMING THAT PROPOSED 500-NUMBER ALLOCATION WOULD  
NOT BE A ONE-SHOT ALLOCATION BUT AN INITIAL ALLOCATION ONLY,  
TO BE REPLENISHED REGULARLY IN ORDER KEEP CAMP POPULATION AT  
THAT FIGURE, AND THAT SAME WOULD BE TRUE OF NUMBERS ALLOCATED  
BY OTHER COUNTRIES. COST OF UNHCR OF SETTING UP CAMP WOULD  
NOT BE JUSTIFIED OTHERWISE.

6. RE SUGGESTION IN LAST SENTENCE PARA ONE REFTTEL THAT UNHCR  
MIGHT "PUBLICLY URGE GOS TOWARDS A MORE HUMANITARIAN STANCE,"  
WE EMPHATICALLY URGE THAT THIS NOT BE DONE. SINGAPOREANS FEEL  
THAT, CONSIDERING THEIR UNIQUE LAND/POPULATION SITUATION,  
THEY HAVE DONE REASONABLY WELL BY REFUGEES IN PERMITTING  
HUNDREDS TO TRANSIT SINGAPORE. APART FROM MALAYSIA, THAILAND  
AND HANDFUL OF WESTERN COUNTRIES, THEY NOT AWARE THAT OTHER  
NATIONS OF WORLD HAVE BEEN EVEN THIS FORTH-COMING. PUBLIC  
SCOLDING FROM UNHCR--OR ANY IMPLIED CRITICISM ON PART UNHCR--  
WILL NOT BE HELPFUL TO REFUGEES BUT COULD HAVE OPPOSITE  
EFFECT.

INGRAHAM

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** REFUGEES, PROGRAMS (PROJECTS)  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 12 jun 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Document Unique ID:** 00  
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**Executive Order:** GS  
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**Expiration:**  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Reference:** 78 GENEVA 8794  
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**Review Content Flags:**  
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**Review Transfer Date:**  
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**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** INDOCHINESE REFUGEES: SINGAPORE TRANSIT CENTER  
**TAGS:** SREF, SN  
**To:** STATE BANGKOK  
**Type:** TE  
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